

Conference Abstract

Lessons Learnt from Implementing a New Collection Management System: a Case Study from RBG Kew

Alan Paton[‡], John Adcock[‡], Evgeniy Meyke[§], Udayangani Liu[‡], Chris Soh[‡], Richard Dodd[‡], Robert Turner[‡]

[‡] Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, London, United Kingdom

[§] EarthCape, Helsinki, Finland

Corresponding author: Alan Paton (a.paton@kew.org)

Received: 30 Aug 2024 | Published: 02 Sep 2024

Citation: Paton A, Adcock J, Meyke E, Liu U, Soh C, Dodd R, Turner R (2024) Lessons Learnt from Implementing a New Collection Management System: a Case Study from RBG Kew. Biodiversity Information Science and Standards 8: e135955. <https://doi.org/10.3897/biss.8.135955>

Abstract

The Integrated Collection Management System (ICMS), built in collaboration with [EarthCape Oy](#), provides a modern, secure, and compliant system to manage and disseminate Kew's data, locally and globally.

Benefits of the ICMS

- Accessible data in one system to support business requirements, providing efficient management of information to support all curational and research activities.
- Auditing and updating collections, ensuring compliance with relevant laws on access to genetic resources, benefit sharing, institutional agreements on the transfer of material and Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species compliance.
- Elimination of risk: maintenance of previous legacy systems involves a high likelihood of failure.
- Development Team: maintaining the new system requires fewer resources.

This presentation will focus on the planning, choosing, and implementation of our new ICMS. The ICMS project is time critical due to the need to replace the historic collection management systems that had become outdated and non-compliant with relevant legislation. This carried an unacceptable risk of data loss and limited accessibility for science and research. We will cover understanding and collating the business requirements for each collection and procuring a supplier who could collaborate with Kew by providing a system that could be developed to support collection data requirements across all collections.

We will provide insights into end users' and development team's experiences with the implementation work of moving collection data from existing well known internal systems to a modern integrated system. Although positive, there are number of areas where end users and the development team found the experience sometimes frustrating and challenging, while at the same time working and managing their daily activities. The presentation will cover the lessons learnt through the implementation process of developing and testing the system for each collection.

Major Lessons Learnt through the Implementation Phase

Management Support and Stakeholder Engagement: It was essential that the project had full management support and engagement from the onset of the project planning phase. This support was critical in all communications and planning allowing collection managers to understand the strategic importance and need to align staff and their time to support the implementation of their collections. Key staff from each collection played a significant role in supporting the collation of business requirements, being part of the tender process, supporting the identification of the successful supplier, and being part of the testing cycles.

Planning: To ensure robust business planning and effective implementation of the system it is critical that time is scheduled within the relevant delivery departments and key staff are appointed in the early stages to provide robust and accurate information to support the development and to approve the business plan.

- Investment was made in appointing a business analyst to capture all the 'As Is' and 'To Be' business requirements and agreeing and documenting clearly what was not in scope with stakeholders.
- A programme manager was appointed to support the production of the business case together with supporting the engagement with key stakeholders and maintaining all the communications to support the programme.
- Once the business case was approved, these roles played a key part in the delivery of the implementation plan and recruiting additional staff to support the rollout of the programme.

Use of the Spectrum Standard: This standard provided a clear framework to use when developing the requirements and approach for the new ICMS, allowing the Team to define what the system must be able to do. ([Spectrum Collections Trust](#))

Tender Process and Relationship with Supplier: The business requirements supported the production of the tender specification allowing prospective suppliers to align their responses to Kew's specific needs. A key requirement from suppliers was to highlight how they would work collaboratively with Kew throughout the implementation process to ensure that the bespoke needs of each collection were met.

Development and Deployment: As the project progressed with more collections being added to the system, it became apparent that more staff were required to support data cleaning, testing and training, in addition to utilising collection staff to deliver testing cycles.

- Scope was minimised by having a clear business case outlining both what was in scope and out of scope for the project.
- Constant communication and pre-implementation phase engagement was carried out to allow staff to plan and mitigate changes to their usual operations, minimising disruption to day-to-day business
- There were time challenges for smaller collections with few staff and more time needed to be given to allow staff feedback and engagement.

Post Project Costs: Ongoing staff and system licence costs need to be communicated clearly within the business case to ensure these costs are factored into the institution's core budget as the system becomes 'Business as usual.'

Keywords

Earthcape Oy, business case, testing, stakeholder engagement, project management

Presenting author

Alan Paton

Presented at

SPNHC-TDWG 2024

Conflicts of interest

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.